Find out what's trending in holiday beauty this season. Personal Best

Tampa Bay Times

FLORIDA'S BEST NEWSPAPER | tampabay.com | ★★★★ SATURDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2017 | $1

In the know

SNOWFALL BLANKETS PARTS OF DEEP SOUTH

Accumulations of 6 inches were reported in Mississippi and northern Georgia, while at least 5 inches fell in Alabama. Rare snow flurries were spotted in New Orleans, and motorists were told to stay off the road in other parts of Louisiana for fear of ice. Even South Texas experienced a rare snowfall. **Nation, 7A**

Cold is coming here, too: Get ready for a cold front that should keep things cool through Sunday. Morning temperatures will be in the low 60s but will sink into the 50s in the afternoon. **Local, 1B**

U.S. gains 228K jobs in November

The nation's economy is the strongest it's been in a decade and has now added jobs for a record-setting 86 consecutive months. **Business, 3B**

Baker sends text after losing race

After his defeat in a tough battle against St. Petersburg Mayor Rick Kriseman, former Mayor Rick Baker finally conceded the Friday after the election. **Local, 1B**

Armwood plays for state title

The Hawks take on Miami Northwestern. **Get the late results at tampabay.com/sports/hometeam/.**

Mini doughnuts hit St. Petersburg

The Tampa-based Mini Doughnut Factory is open in Historic Uptown. **Etc, 2B**

TODAY'S WEATHER

Turning cooler

8 a.m.	Noon	4 p.m.	8 p.m.
61°	61°	58°	54°

70% chance of rain

More, back page of Sports

tampabay.com

Get up and go

Itching for something fun to do but don't know what's going on? Worry not. We give you the rundown on local events at **tampabay.com/things-to-do**.

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Vol. 134 No. 138
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JAMES BORCHUCK | Times

Veterans Expressway's first express toll lane from Gunn Highway to Hillsborough Avenue is separated by plastic poles.

Veterans' express lanes open

The new 6-mile toll lanes are free — for now. When and how much they'll cost are unknown.

BY CAITLIN JOHNSTON
Times Staff Writer

TAMPA — Drivers on the Veterans Expressway will gain an extra lane from Gunn Highway to Hillsborough Avenue starting today.

But there's a catch: Once drivers enter the lane, they won't be able to leave it — not until a designated exit about 6 miles later.

There will be no merging, no changing of the mind. If commuters miss the entrance, they won't be able to jump in later. Plastic poles separate the lane from the rest of traffic.

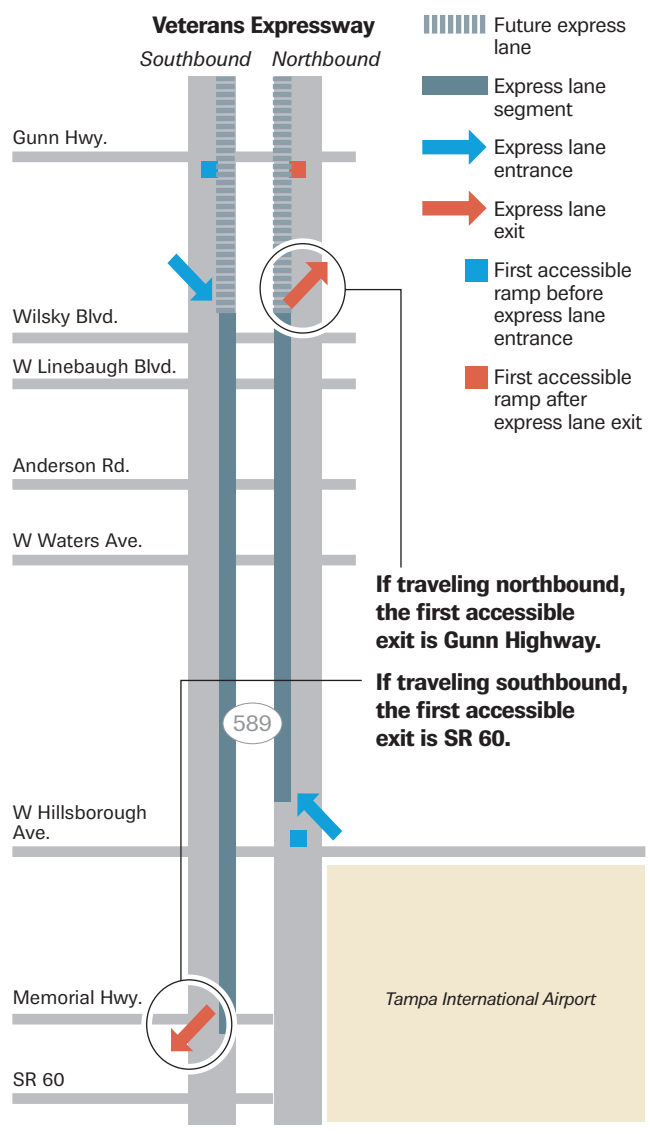
Welcome to the world of express toll lanes and dynamic pricing, Tampa Bay. Miami, Washington, D.C., and other cities across the country are familiar with these toll concepts. Now local drivers will be introduced to them.

Once the other three-mile stretch of the extra lane from Gunn to Dale Mabry Highway opens in the spring, drivers will have to pay an extra toll — on top of the one they already pay to use the Veterans — if they want to bypass traffic using this new 9-mile express lane. The price of that toll will rise and fall

» See EXPRESS, 6A

Veterans Expressway: new express lanes

An additional lane is opening in each direction on the Veterans Expressway. Unlike other lanes, though, users can enter and exit only at one point.



Source: Florida's Turnpike Enterprise

Times

Tax cut a pinch in plans for Rays

The removal of an exemption would make it more costly to build stadiums.

BY STEVE CONTORNO
Times Staff Writer

Whether the Tampa Bay Rays end up in Ybor City or in a new ballpark in Pinellas County, the federal tax overhaul that is under way in Congress could make it much more costly to build the team's next home.

The version of the tax cut approved by the U.S. House of Representatives eliminates a tax exemption on bonds issued to build or renovate stadiums.

That exemption has saved local governments — or cost the federal government, depending on your point of view — tens of millions of dollars on stadiums across Tampa Bay.

Officials in both Hillsborough County and St. Petersburg — the communities that have taken the lead on Rays negotiations — say that if it passes, the cost of borrowing money to build a new ballpark will go up significantly.

"Certainly having to issue all taxable bonds for a new Rays stadium will increase the city's cost," said Joe Zeoli of St. Petersburg's economic development administration.

By millions of dollars?

"I would think so," said Bonnie Wise, Hillsborough County's chief financial officer.

Of course, it only costs more if those governments decide to help build the Rays a new ballpark. Proponents of the House tax bill say the provision will make local governments think twice about using taxpayer dollars to pay for stadiums for teams that are owned by millionaires and worth billions of dollars.

Rays owner Stuart Sternberg said the team's contribution could be around $150 million on a facility that is likely to cost more than $600 million.

The elimination of the tax exemption was first introduced as a bill in 2016 by U.S. Rep. Steve Russell, R-Okla., who suggested using the savings for defense spending.

Cutting the exemption, he said, "is a step in the right direction, for our national security, as well as for fixing our annual deficits."

At President Donald Trump's urging, Congress is rapidly moving ahead with a $1.5 trillion tax cut that will lower the corporate tax rate from 35 percent to 20 percent and nearly double the standard deduction for individual filers.

To help cover the bill's price tag, lawmakers have targeted dozens of exemptions in the tax

» See STADIUMS, 6A

JW Marriott to lure luxe events

The high-end brand will run a hotel in Water Street Tampa, helping the convention scene.

BY RICHARD DANIELSON
Times Staff Writer

TAMPA — JW Marriott, a luxury hotel brand new to Tampa, will run the new 519-room hotel that the Water Street Tampa project is building next to the Marriott Waterside Hotel & Marina, developers announced Friday.

Construction on the 26-story hotel is expected to start early next year. It is expected to open in 2020, before the city hosts Super Bowl LV in February 2021.

JW Marriott is a high-end Marriott brand that can be found in Miami, Orlando and Marco Island and is expected to help Tampa attract more upscale conventions.

"It's definitely a premium brand," Alex Kaptzan, vice president of convention sales at Visit Tampa Bay, Hillsborough County's convention planning organization. "I'm expecting it to be transformational."

Here's how: So far, Tampa has done well attracting conventions held by social, military, educational, religious and fraternal groups. It's good business the city wants to keep, but these aren't necessarily big-spending groups.

Having a JW Marriott, which touts its top-shelf service, even boasting it teamed up with the Joffrey Ballet to create a training program to develop its staff's "poise and grace," will allow the

» See JW, 11A

Trump says America needs Moore to win

The president's rally in Pensacola offers a boost to the Alabama U.S. Senate candidate.

Associated Press

PENSACOLA — President Donald Trump on Friday urged voters to elect a Republican Senate candidate in Alabama who has been dogged by allegations of sexual misconduct, warning that America "cannot afford" to have a Democrat win the hard-fought campaign instead.

Trump gave a boost to the campaign of GOP Senate candidate Roy Moore during a raucous campaign rally in the Florida Panhandle, near the state line with Alabama.

"We cannot afford, the future of this country cannot afford to lose the seat," Trump said, referring to his party's razor-thin 52-48 advantage in that chamber of Congress.

Trump said Moore's opponent, Doug Jones, is a "liberal Democrat" who would be "completely controlled" by Democratic leaders Nancy Pelosi in the House and Chuck Schumer in the Senate.

"He's their total puppet and

» See TRUMP, 6A

Getty Images

President Donald Trump basks in applause as he holds a rally Friday at the Pensacola Bay Center. Even though his rally was in Florida, he weighed in on the Alabama Senate campaign.

Parents question transport service

The private company drives special-needs kids.

BY ANASTASIA DAWSON
Times Staff Writer

RIVERVIEW — As a foster parent with two sons of her own, Kayla Storey has learned all the tricks to get her kids out of bed and off to school every morning. But this year, Storey says she's the one waking up every school day with a knot in her stomach.

It's been there ever since the first day of classes, when a contracted driver from American Logistics Company pulled into her Riverview driveway to take Owen, her 5-year-old deaf son, to Doby Elementary School in Apollo Beach.

"They had no identification, no logo on the van and they didn't even bring car seats, I watched them try to strap my 50-pound kid into the front seat," Storey said. "Now we're halfway through the year and still fighting for my son to get a safe ride to school … It's like an insane nightmare."

This is the fourth year the Hillsborough School District has used American Logistics Company to transport students pro-

» See TRANSPORT, 13A